

to promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which  
where in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to  
provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: Toward a Christian Rural Civilization."

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## A SERVICE OF DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF RURAL LIFE

By Edward Krusen Ziegler\*

**INSTRUMENTAL PRELUDE**—Fairest Lord Jesus—*Crusaders' Hymn*  
(Let every worshipper bow his head in adoration and silent prayer.)

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

**Leader:** "In wonder workings, or some bush afame  
Men Look for God and fancy Him concealed;  
But in earth's common things He stands revealed  
While grass and flowers and stars spell out His name."  
The Heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

**People:** The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;  
The world and they that dwell therein.

**Leader:** O God of our salvation,  
Thou art the confidence of all the ends of the earth.

**People:** Thou visitest the earth and waterest it;  
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly.  
Thou settlest the ridges thereof,  
Thou makest it soft with showers;  
Thou blessest the springing thereof.

**All:** O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth.  
Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts  
His majestic splendor fills the whole earth.

### THE INVOCATION—Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving for this World, by Walter Rauschenbusch<sup>1</sup>

O God, we thank thee for this universe, our great home; for its vastness and its riches, and for the manifoldness of the life which teems upon it and of which we are part. We praise thee for the arching sky and the blessed winds, for the driving clouds and the constellations on high. We praise thee for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills, for the trees, and for the grass under our feet. We thank thee for our senses by which we can see the splendor of the morning, and hear the jubilant songs of love, and smell the breath of the springtime. Grant us, we pray thee, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thornbush by the wayside is aflame with the glory of God.

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all the living things, our little brothers, to whom thou hast given this earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the

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past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the Earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve thee in their place better than we in ours.

When our use of this world is over and we make room for others, may we not leave anything ravished by our greed or spoiled by our ignorance, but may we hand on our common heritage fairer and sweeter through our use of it, undiminished in fertility and joy, that so our bodies may return in peace to the great mother who nourished them and our spirits may round the circle of a perfect life in thee.

**HYMN OF ADORATION—Fairest Lord Jesus. Tune—"Crusaders' Hymn"**

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,  
O Thou of God and man the Son;  
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,  
Thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Fair are the meadows, Fairer still the woodlands,  
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;  
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,  
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, Fairer still the moonlight,  
And all the twinkling, starry host;  
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer  
Than all the angels heaven can boast. AMEN.

**A CONFESSION OF FAITH. (All reading in unison)**

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.**

**The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

**As the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.**

**So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his figtree; and none shall make them afraid: For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.**

**And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.**

**MEDITATION<sup>2</sup>**

**A LITANY AND ACT OF DEDICATION**

Let us give thanks to God:

For the beauty of thy world, the glory of star-lit skies, the wonder of the changing seasons, the ever-new miracle of stirring life in field and forest,

**We give Thee thanks, O God.**

For the privilege of sharing with Thee in the act of creating the good things of earth for Thy children, and for Thy nearness in all the processes of agricultural life,

**We give Thee thanks, O God.**



For the Christ of the country road, who walked and served in the pleasant land of Galilee, and who today walks the country roads of the world in comradeship with all who till the soil,

**We give Thee thanks, O God.**

For the widening horizons of rural life, the open doors in which entering we may serve the rural peoples of the world, and walk by the byways with Christ,

**We give Thee thanks, O God.**

That it may please Thee to grant us vision of an earth redeemed and used as a sacred trust for the welfare of all Thy great family on earth,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That all farmer folk in all lands may walk in joyous comradeship with Thee in the sowing and harvesting of their crops,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That the homes of country folk everywhere may be centers of serene, abundant and goodly living,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That it may please Thee to guide and guard all children and youth in the rural areas of the world that they may come to be Thy true children,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That it may please Thee so to bless the rural churches of the world and inspire them with vision, so that their fellowship may be enriched and they may bring all rural peoples to Thee, into Thy great family,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That rural ministers and missionaries, and those institutions which train them may realize the greatness of their calling, and may dedicate themselves to the redemption of rural living in Thy name,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

That it may please Thee speedily to grant a just and lasting peace in all the earth, that all peoples may again beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, that they may all live together in brotherhood and tranquillity in the lands Thou hast given unto them,

**We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord.**

To the re-creation of the beloved community bound together by ties of godly brotherly love in every countryside, in which all men shall share with joy in sowing the seed and reaping the harvest of the Kingdom of God,

**We dedicate our hands and minds, O God.**

To a renewed appreciation of the Holy Earth and its gifts, and to a consecrated stewardship of all its resources, material and human,

**We dedicate our hands and minds, O God.**

To comradeship with the rural folk of all the world, and to serving them devotedly with all the gifts and graces Thou has vouchsafed unto us,

**We dedicate our lives, O God.**

Accept our thanksgiving, hear Thou our prayers and intercessions, graciously use the gifts of mind, body, and life which we now lay upon Thy altar, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



HYMN OF DEDICATION—Where Winds the Road. Tune—"Germany, L. M."

Where winds the road o'er hill and dale,  
Where field and forest mark the land;  
In all that Thou dost man entail,  
We see the imprint of Thy hand.

On furrow long, in village street,  
By singing brook or cottage door,  
In friendly word when neighbors meet,  
We come to feel Thee more and more.

In winter's snow, in summer's sun,  
The joy of spring, the hush of fall,  
In all the course the seasons run,  
We praise Thee as the Lord of all.

Thou Christ who lovest field and wood,  
E'er sought new strength in quiet glen;  
Help us who stand where Thou hast stood,  
Come now and walk the fields again.

Till men in all Thy countryside,  
Shall cease from wanton greed and strife,  
Shall learn in Thy way to abide,  
The joy of more abundant life.

—HOWARD E. MATHER

THE BENEDICTION

<sup>1</sup> Used with the kind permission of the Pilgrim Press, Boston, Publisher.

<sup>2</sup> Meditation suggestions: Psalm 65:9-10; Genesis 2:15; Deuteronomy 8:7-14; II Corinthians 9:10.

REPRINT EDITION

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